

Swami Ram's Reincarnation

By FRANK BLIGHTON

Copyright.

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—While his train is held on a siding Tom Davenport, engineer of the Pacific Limited, becomes interested in the future movements of a small brown man, evidently a foreigner, and invents a story. What he discovers sends him back to his cab in a hurry. Buchanan Williams, mining man, boards the train and makes the acquaintance of the stranger, Jalingrao Jitendra, who proves to be an East Indian. The limited is wrecked.

CHAPTER II.—Williams, though painfully burned, saves Jitendra, who had been pinned under the wreck. The Hindu vows eternal gratitude. Williams receives a message telling him Mexican revolutionaries have seized his mine, known as "El Tigre," and killed or driven off the Americans.

CHAPTER III.—On his way to his mine, alone, Williams discovers that Jitendra is following him, and he orders him to turn back. The Hindu apparently acquiesces, but when Williams reaches the mine he finds Jitendra there.

CHAPTER IV.—The Hindu declares Fate has bound him and Williams together, and asserts mysteriously that the gods Vishnu and Siva are with him. Williams, somewhat touched, allows him to stay. While in a sleep of exhaustion Williams is made prisoner by a Mexican force headed by Manuel Pacheco, his former mine foreman. With Jitendra, also a prisoner, the party sets out for Zapadillo. On the way Pacheco brutally strikes Williams and almost immediately falls from his horse dead, apparently without cause.

CHAPTER V.—Arriving at Zapadillo Williams and Jitendra are placed in a fifth cell. Williams is visited by Herbert Hardinge, representative of a rival mining company. He offers Williams his liberty if he will abandon El Tigre and agree to leave the country. Williams indignantly refuses.

The world of strife and struggle, of bitter hate and burning discord, of which he had been a part was blotted out, and instead, there was only a superlative sense of contentment, a divine peace, a sweet oblivion.

"Sahib Buck! Sahib Buck!" Williams struggled in dazed fashion to his knees.

Between his dream and the darkness he was so confused that he did not realize where he was—or why. Something cold, metallic, slender, was forcing itself into his hands.

"There is little time, sahib," hissed the voice. "See—the door is open and the gods granted thy request. Make haste, I pray thee, and depart. Beware of the other who sits asleep just within the gate of this place."

"W—who—what the devil are you talking about? Oh, I remember now—it's you, Jitendra, isn't it?"

"Yes, sahib, but delay not. The night is yet young—by dawn thou must be far from here."

Unbelievably the mine owner staggered to his feet. He tried to look around the obscure interior of the cell. Then he saw that the iron-bound oak door leading into the corridor was open, as a draft of air came through.

Near it two flaming points of light, swaying rhythmically in the corner, blazed back at him. Buck stumbled toward them, groping blindly.

Jitendra's hand was on his arm—the Hindu's slender fingers bit down on his biceps like steel tongues.

"Sahib, beware the vengeance of Vishnu! Not that way!"

He felt himself drawn forcibly aside and thrust into the corridor. He turned to glance at his friend. Two other crimson, glaring points of light blazed back into his startled eyes, but these seemed suspended just above the white turban which the Oriental wore. Like those the mine owner had seen in the cell corner, they might have been the angry orbs of the gods at whom he had scoffed.

Buck trembled. A cold sweat streamed out on his forehead. He at last realized that he was in the passage leading to the gate of the carcel, and in his hands was a rifle—the thing he had jestingly commanded the patient, little brown man to secure for him through the exercise of his occult powers.

"Hurry, Sahib Buck," whispered Jitendra; "tarry not for me, for Vishnu and Siva have me in their holy keeping. Go thou—and quickly!"

The cool, satiny rifle barrel sent a thrill of madly intoxicating ecstasy rioting through the American's brain. Like the tiger, from whom he had been named, he padded stealthily along the short passage leading to the gate of the prison, filled with an angry vengeance.

The sleeping sentinel was loling in his chair. His weapon thudded down upon the head of the somnolent soldier, who rolled to the ground.

Williams seized the ringed key from the guard's inert fingers and thrust it into the lock. The last barrier swung inward, the soft breeze of the refulgent night kissed his feverish face, and he was blotted out by its protecting curtain.

Jalingrao Jitendra squatted in the corner of the cell from which the American had so miraculously been released, and bent over the prostrate figure of the Mexican who had been on guard in the corridor.

Back and forth on the breast of the soldier, who lay rigidly upon his back, swayed two sinister, menacing points of crimson, and in perfect unison swayed also two others upon the head of the Hindu.

"Wouldst thou have life?" sternly demanded the little brown man of the prostrate figure.

"Thou hast well what I shall say," went on the other in cold, precise accents. "If they wake to find Sahib Buck gone, thou, instead of he, will die. So, thou too must depart."

He leaned closer to the man, whose face was distorted with a hideous terror. As the Mexican comprehended the half-friendly attitude of the Hindu, hope struggled with despair in his eyes.

"Tell me, is it true that I, too, am to die with the coming of the sun?" The Mexican nodded. "But that, senior, is not of my doing, nor is it in my power to save you—unless you flee with El Americano."

"We shall see," crisply returned the Oriental. "Where is it that the killers of men will work their evil powers upon me if I remain?"

"In the yard of the carcel, senior. They will tell you to go, that you are free, and then as you near the gate to pass, through it they will fire at your back."

Jitendra pondered a moment, his head inclined a little forward. He was debating what course to pursue. If he attempted to flee, now out into the night in this unknown country, his swollen feet would be a terrible handicap. Even with a horse he would almost certainly be seen, overtaken and shot by the soldiers who swarmed through the province of Sinahoa.

Beside, Sahib Buck must have ample time to reach his friends, else what he had done for his preserver would count for nothing.

"Where will the men stand to slay one who bears them no malice?" he queried.

"Does the senior remember how the carcel yard looks?"

"Somewhat."

"The passage through which you were brought to this cell leads to the carcel yard. Directly across on the other side is the gate to the street. The soldiers—"

"How many?"

"Six, senior, and a corporal, make up the firing squad. These will take you to the yard. You will be told that any reasonable request of yours will be granted. It may also be made to appear that you are free to depart. But, if so, be not deceived. You will never pass the gate alive."

"Behind, near the edge of the yard, close to the building and directly over an old drain, the six will stand with rifles ready. As you near the gate you will die by their shots. I have spoken truth, senior, I swear it by the saints."

"What is this drain?—I do not understand."

"A very old, large, round pipe, senior, once used to carry off waste, but now abandoned. You may see the end above the ground on the way to the gate. It is not far from the carcel itself where it comes up through the ground, from there it runs along the yard beneath where the soldiers stand. Senior, I swear I have told you all—will you now not take from me this strange, hideous monster with the flaming eyes, ere I die?"

"One more thing must I know," icily replied the Hindu. "If I should ask of the corporal a cigarette—what then?"

"The officer in command would give it to you."

"Now, listen with care to my words—for on them hang life or death for thee," venomously hissed Jitendra, bending so low that his lips almost touched those of the other man. "I shall ask for that cigarette when I start for the gate. And, if I am given it not—well, it were better for thee that thou wert never born. If I receive it, and thou also obey me in what I shall now require of thee—it shall be life and joy to thee in the years to come. Heed well, therefore, and fail not to obey me in all I shall command of thee."

He whispered a few words in the ear of the prostrate figure.

"That is all," he observed.

"I understand, senior. By the blessed saints, I swear to do as you have asked. Now, may I depart?"

Slowly Jitendra arose and stood before the door. The angry, crimson orbs above the breast of the soldier vanished, to reappear near the other two above the Hindu's turban.

"All men are brothers and thou art mine," resumed Jitendra. "To kill is sin. Therefore, and because thou hast promised to do as I have commanded, I bind upon thee the sacred symbols of Vishnu and Siva—that no harm may hereafter come to thee. Loose thy shirt."

The quivering Mexican obeyed. Something cold, clammy, and unpleasantly repugnant wrapped itself around him.

"Thus does Siva enfold thee," went on the Oriental. "Never again canst thou offend the gods by causing the death of any living thing." His little arm swung itself out in the darkness, and again the shuddering Mexican experienced the sublimity of horror as his hot blood raced through his icy body.

"With Vishnu, too, do I crown thee, brother. Now, if thou do but keep thy promise all will be well with thee. But—Jitendra paused significantly—"of this also be assured. If I die at sunrise because thou hast lied, the gods Vishnu and Siva die not with me, but live on forever. Whither thou goest, even if it were to the ends of the earth, there Vishnu will pursue thee—and Siva, too, will seek thee out!"

CHAPTER VII.

Jitendra Disappears.

His excellency, Governor General Juan Moreno, scowled blackly into the sleep-heavy countenance of Herbert Hardinge. The two sat in the temporary official headquarters of the pro-

visional government of Sinahoa. It was a little before dawn.

"Your bird has flown, senior," he tersely observed.

"What do you mean?" Hardinge's dismayed face grew gray beneath its reddish tan.

Moreno shrugged his shoulders.

"I have the honor to inform you," punctiliously sneered the insurrecto, "that Senior Williams escaped from his cell some time tonight and is still at large. I have given orders that he shall be brought in, dead or alive. My men are searching everywhere for him. We learned of it an hour ago, when the officer of the night changed the guards at the prison."

"Why—it's impossible," gasped Hardinge. "How did he manage to do it?"

"We do not know. The sentry, at the gate was found with his skull crushed and the gate open. Williams was gone. The guard who was on duty in the corridor, and who was personally responsible for the security of the prisoners, is under suspicion, but he cannot be found."

"Did the other prisoner escape also—the one claiming to be a British subject?"

"No. I do not understand why. We found him asleep in the cell. He answers no questions. He will be executed at sunrise, and Williams will be shot wherever found—those are my orders."

Hardinge nodded uneasily.

The escape was a thing he had not counted upon. With El Tigre's owner at large, his plans for seizing the mine might not be so easily carried out. The American government might make representations to Great Britain or Mexico, through diplomatic channels.

Hardinge's position, in that event, would be far from enviable. The little brown man who had been in the cell during his interview with Williams a few hours before might also prove to be an awkward stumbling block. With him gone, there would at least be no confirmatory witness to his threats.

Hardinge rose from his chair.

The first faint shimmer of the dawn was glinting the tops of the hills in the east. The time for the execution was near, and the Englishman determined to observe the removal of, at least, one possible impediment to his future schemes.

"Five million dollars is too big a stake to take any more chances of losing," he muttered as he reached the jail gate. "I might have known that a resolute fighter like Williams would be up to some trick—probably he promised that guard enough pesos to make him rich. If I'd been at all clever I would have seen this thing through myself, even if I had to walk that foul-smelling corridor all night to make sure."

He slipped into the jail yard, heedless of the glorious beauty of the new day, just in time to see the frail figure of the Hindu as he emerged from the building.

Jitendra was curiously calm—the face of Buddha himself could not have been more inscrutable, nor unmoved by fear. He chanted something in a low, clear tone as he passed Hardinge without a look of recognition.

The agent for the United Kingdom Exploration company shivered.

There was a quality in the timbre of that voice suggesting a mysterious, malign presence—a sense of something hovering over and around the place of death, invisible but, nevertheless, very real. The words, too, were disquieting.

If the red player think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They little know the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Jitendra paused, waiting meekly for directions. The corporal in command of the squad pointed toward the wall.

"Your sentence has been set aside, senior. There is the path to the street."

The prisoner had not been bound. As the gate of the jail yard swung invitingly open the leering soldiers parted their ranks, resting their rifles on the ground—assuming an air of careless indifference, but, nevertheless, covertly watching the man.

"They're going to give him a lay fuen," shivered Hardinge. "I guess Moreno's got cold feet on his court-martial sentence—don't want to take chances officially. I wish I hadn't told him yesterday that this fellow claimed to be a British subject. If he should prove a good sprinter and they should miss—"

He chilled and broke off.

Jitendra stepped lightly and without emotion toward the gate, flinging back over his shoulder the innocent smile of a pleased child. Hardinge heard the low command and saw a soldier start to raise his rifle. He turned away.

A formal execution, with a man defiantly facing the firing squad, was not so unusual as to excite horror when the condemned was a native. But this was the epitome of betrayal—the deliberate, cowardly assassination of a man who has been told that he is free to depart, only to fall, bludgeoned from behind, at the very verge of his coveted freedom.

La ley fuen is truly Mexican.

"Will you give me a cigarette, sir?" Hardinge whirled.

Jitendra was retracing his steps toward the corporal in command. Murder is murder—but, even in Mexico, it is hard for a murderer to shoot down a pitiful, gaunt, soft-eyed, unsuspecting atom of humanity while appealing to him for a last solace.

The officer sheepishly passed over the materials. Jitendra dexterously rolled the golden-brown tobacco in the wrapper, and, still smiling, reached for the match which was tendered him.

He bowed his thanks and again

walked firmly toward the gate. A few feet further on he stopped to light the match on the end of the old drain where it projected above the ground. Crouching low, he sheltered the flame with his cupped hands.

The blazing remnant he dropped into the hole. He rose, facing the impatient soldiers, puffing vigorously, then turned and walked a step or two further in the direction of the entrance, still some distance away, which it was never intended he should reach alive.

This time Hardinge knew there would be no delay in the death-dealing volley.

A sound, curiously resembling a hiss, swept along beneath the surface of the ground, almost at the Englishman's feet. It was not unlike the subdued "twish" of a rocket as it hurtled through the air, or the whisper of a serpent beneath a tuft of grass.

The corporal had no time to recover from his surprise. Beneath his feet the earth suddenly upheaved, followed by a roar that mingled with the volley of the firing squad.

A great cloud of smoke leaped high above the carcel walls, carrying with it a shower of sun-baked, blood-stained earth, mingled with fragments of flesh. Slowly the whitish-blue wreaths settled down or drifted away. Soldiers were strewn over the ground—some hideously mangled corpses, others writhing in agony.

Hardinge, miraculously uninjured, peered with amazed and horror-filled eyes for some sight of the Hindu.

Jalingrao Jitendra had vanished. Thunderstruck for an instant, the quick-witted knave at the next bolted for the jail gate. He had not reached the opening, however, when a frightful yell of terror rose outside in the streets of Zapadillo.

"Los Americanos! El Tigre! El Tigre!"

Behind the roar of other rifles rang out a hearty cheer. Herbert Hardinge, scurrying across the road for protection with Moreno's bodyguard, sprawled suddenly and lay still.

A hatless giant, with yellow hair and implacable blue eyes, upon his ferocious face a satyr's smile of utter contempt for danger, was riding at the head of the cyclonic knot of men.

His smoking rifle told the story of the Englishman's passing.

Shrieking Mexicans scattered for safety in every direction before that whirlwind, tigerish assault—feeling as their forefathers had fled three generations before when confronted by fighting men of Anglo-Saxon blood.

With a venomous look of semi-satisfaction, Buck Williams spurred his foaming horse over Hardinge's corpse, straight into the jail yard.

He sharply reined in the animal, as his inquisitorial eyes fell upon Jitendra's turban. He leaped to the ground and picked up the discarded head-dress.

"Too late!" he groaned. "I was sure that volley I heard was his finish. Great God! what hellish luck—five minutes more and I should have saved him!"

With a perplexed glance at the dead and dying soldiers clustered in or around the huge hole freshly gnashed in the earth, he remounted and rode dejectedly through the gate.

A man hurried up to him.

"Did you find him, Buck?"

"He's gone, Scotty. But he evidently had company, for hell must have broken loose in that jail yard—everybody's dead in there!"

"Gosh—that's tough! But why didn't you bring him along with you last night, Buck? The boys was on the way five minutes after we got the news down in Culiacan yesterday afternoon, and all Mexico couldn't have taken either you or him away from us."

"I don't know, Scotty. I was crazy, I suppose. All I thought of was myself—and getting back here to clean up that dog Hardinge. I remember Jitendra's saying something about beating it quick, and that his gods would keep an eye out for him. Scotty, I can't ever forgive myself—he was a good scout."

"He sure musta been, Buck!" consoled the superintendent. "But I wouldn't—"

"Look what he did for me," interrupted Williams. "He followed me almost five hundred miles after I threatened to shoot him if I saw him again; he gave Pacheco the 'Broadway Rouse' in some fashion I have never been able to figure out, the very minute that dirty greaser struck me across the face; and last night he grew this gun right up in the middle of that cell in there and then opened the door for me—all because I dragged him from under that wrecked car. And then I laid down on him like a yellow pup. I ain't a man, Scotty—I'm a pop-eyed, goose-brained blob! I might have figured they'd hand it to him pronto with me gone!"

"Aw! I don't take it so much to heart, Buck. A man can't think of everything when he's making a pitaway. Besides, it ain't all your fault. If he could git you out, why couldn't he git out himself? What was there to hinder him from followin' you?"

"I don't know, Scotty. But I do know that he thought of me first—that's what galls me—and I never thought of him till I was half-way to Culiacan and run into you boys."

"Well, heeding won't help us any. If the little fellow's dead he ain't got nothing more to worry about. He's better off'n we are, I guess, for Moreno'll git his men together and start something if we don't beat it for El Tigre before they rally."

(To be concluded next week)

Alfalfa Seed

Buy seed that you can see before you pay for it. Buy seed that you can return if you are not satisfied. Buy seed that complies with the Seed Laws of Washington and Oregon.

We can ship carloads or less from our warehouses at Seattle, Portland, Yakima, Walla Walla, Ellensburg, Wapato and through local agents.

BEST ALFALFA SEED

Has a reputation in the Northwest for the last 25 years. You cannot buy better seed and you cannot get as good seed for less money anywhere.



The Chas. H. Lilly Co.

ORDER YOUR

Fruit Cakes, Pies, Nuts, Lettuce, Celery, Etc., Popcorn, Oranges, Oysters, Grapefruit, Grapes

Page's SWEET SHOP

WE HAVE A REPUTATION TO SUSTAIN

Do you know what it means to live up to a reputation for DEPENDABILITY?

We know—know that it means constant vigilance lest we permit the QUALITY of our wares to be lowered. It also means unvarying courtesy and attention to each and every customer.

When you trade with this great Family Store you are assured of these two advantages—protection and service.

EVERYTHING FOR THE FAMILY, AND ALL DEPENDABLE

We solicit your custom with this guarantee.

Brown's Satisfactory Store

Burns, Oregon

We carry goods advertised on the "Home Products Page"

Will SOMETHING Happen to make you rich?

A rich uncle may die and leave you a roll, but few rich uncles have this habit.

If you get rich the chances are you will first have to save enough money in order to make an investment that will pay.

There are plenty of investments for the man with a little ready cash.

But it is up to you to save cash. The best policy is to deposit a portion of your salary.

A Bank is better than a hole in your pocket through which your money can slip away.

Make our Bank YOUR Bank.

CRANE STATE BANK

CRANE, OREGON

Words of Cheer

In these days of high prices, words of cheer are the ones you want to hear. We have them for you.

During the coming year we will use our utmost endeavor to discharge our deep obligation to our customers by effecting a substantial reduction on the price of every article we sell, where it is humanly possible to do so.

We can not control the prices in the wholesale markets, but we can and will continue to regulate our own profits in such a manner that customers will not only be amply protected, but will be actually favored in every sale we make.

We have no well rounded and glowing effulgence of thanks to hand you in a choice exhibition or rhetoric, but we do offer you our sincere gratitude for your patronage of the past year. It will be our pleasure to serve you even more acceptably in the year to come.



Burns Cash Store